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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

MONDAY, MARCH 24, 1941

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: NOTES ON FOOD AND TEETH." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, U. S. D. A.

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Everyone wants to have strong bones and teeth. Every mother is eager to see to it that her children have fine teeth and strong straight bones. All the secrets about teeth haven't been discovered yet. But as nutrition workers discover more and more about the effect of food on the body, they learn more about teeth.

Recently some facts about children's teeth have come to light during a study at the Maine Experiment Station of food habits and the physical condition of children. The scientists who made this study believe a most important problem of food and health is improving teeth and bones in children. They believe that solving this one problem would solve many other nutrition problems, because good teeth seem to depend on good general nutrition. Good nutrition must start before a child is born and continue through life if teeth are to form properly and keep from decay and other ills.

The Maine investigators believe that every mother should know what food essentials go into the making of teeth, and what foods supply them. All recent studies show that calcium and phosphorus are the building materials for teeth while vitamins A, C, and D are aids in building

The best food for calcium is milk, though such foods as leafy vegetables and sirups like molasses and sorghum help supply calcium. Milk also supplies some phosphorus. Other foods for phosphorus are eggs, lean meat, whole-grain cereals, beans and peas.

Calcium and phosphorus alone can't build teeth. They need the help of at least 3 vitamins. The sunshine vitamin D helps the body absorb and use calcium and phosphorus. Without enough D the body can't put these building materials to good use. In most parts of the United States, particularly the northern part, children can't get enough sunshine in winter to supply the vitamin D they need. They have to get it from fish-liver oil or some vitamin D preparation.

Another vitamin necessary for building teeth is A. Vitamin A helps form the enamel on teeth. Among foods that supply A are green and yellow vegetables, egg yolk, butter and fish-liver oil.

The third vitamin for teeth is C. Vitamin C is naturally in most fruits and vegetables. Citrus fruits, tomatoes, and cabbage are especially rich in C. Vitamin C helps form the dentine under the enamel of teeth. It also helps keep teeth and gums in good condition.

These are the 5 food essentials for building good teeth. Other foods may have an influence on teeth. Scientists don't yet understand all the causes of decay in teeth. But they believe sugar hastens decay. And they know that certain bacteria in the mouth forms acid, and the acid starts decay. They have considerable evidence that it is possible to control this acid by avoiding sweets and starches that adhere to the teeth.

The Maine investigators checking to find out the cause of the poor teeth of many of the children they examined uncovered some significant facts. One was that children's teeth generally showed more decay in spring than in fall. Apparently the poorer diet and health of the winter showed its effect on teeth in spring. And the better food, sunshine, and better health of children during the summer showed its effect on teeth in the fall.

In checking the history of the children with poor teeth, the Maine investigators learned that their mothers had not had much milk before they were born and had eaten too few green and yellow vegetables and fruits. None of the mothers had taken fish-liver oil during the winter or made the most of sunshine in summer.

As for the children themselves, only a few of them had had orange juice and fish liver oil when they were babies; only half of them had egg yolk and vegetables now recommended for infant's diets.

The children averaged only two-thirds as much milk as they needed. Children in a family owning a cow drank more milk than children in families that had to buy milk. Only about a tenth of the children were getting fish-liver oil or other products containing vitamin D. In general their diets were like many American diets--high in starch and sugar; low in milk, fruits and vegetables.

The investigators report that most families had greens as soon as they were up in the spring but from then until gardens were ready meals were likely to be as low in vegetables as during the winter. And gardens are late up as far North as Maine. They suggest that Maine housewives could do much toward improving the family diet by raising more tomatoes for canning, and cabbages and rutabegas for storing. They also suggest putting up more tomatoes and other vegetables and fruits and fewer jellies, jams, and preserves which are largely sugar, and fewer pickles which have little or no food value.

Many of these children with poor teeth ate candy, cookies and other sweets between meals. The investigators suggest that at school and at home when children are hungry between meals they be encouraged to eat fruit rather than candy or other sweets.

Perhaps these brief notes from a recent study of children's food habits will help you in helping your children have better teeth and better health.

